

Inquiries of the Ministry

international wheat trade conference failed to agree upon a minimum price structure, thus establishing a free market and prolonging the uncertainty in the Canadian grain industry, can the minister tell us what initiatives the government is considering toward setting up an equitable guaranteed minimum scale of prices for Canadian grain, both for domestic and export consumption?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): As I have said a number of times in the House during the last ten days, nothing very much has changed as a result of what was done during this particular stage of the discussions. We shall be watching with interest the possibility of pricing talks being reconvened under the jurisdiction of the wheat council.

Mr. Mazankowski: Bearing in mind the desperately low incomes of western farmers, can the minister tell us whether consideration is being given at the present time to increasing the domestic price level of wheat to a figure in the order of \$3 a bushel?

Mr. Lang: There are, of course, a number of issues before us as a government in the form of our proposals affecting grain. But I think the most immediately useful thing we could do would be to get the legislation into the House and proceed to implement the stabilization program and other things of that sort.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could indicate to the House what the government intends to do to alleviate the hard-pressed position of Alberta's 65,000 farmers who in 1970 recorded an average net income of only \$1,325?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar.

TIME OF PAYMENTS TO FARMERS UNDER STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's statement in answer to a question on a televised program yesterday that the government might well come forward with a payment of \$100 million in respect of the stabilization program earlier than the end of the current crop year, can he inform the House as to the approximate time of such a payment? Will it be prior to seeding or June 1?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I cannot add anything to what was said earlier on this subject in the House. I would envisage that it would depend on the specific provisions of the legislation, which of course is not yet before the House. Therefore I doubt that there would be any possibility of this happening before seeding.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's dilemma, but in view of the statement by the minister on the same program about the possibility—

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member cannot ask questions of ministers about statements made outside the House. He should ask his question directly if he seeks information from the minister at this time.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, may I rephrase my question. Will it be possible, earlier than the end of the current crop year, to make a payment on the basis of the plans set out in the cereal grains stabilization program, or are other methods being considered which will make earlier payment possible?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, that whole question is being considered.

INQUIRY AS TO CONTINUATION OF LIFT PROGRAM IN NEXT CROP YEAR

Mr. H. A. Moore (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister planning the continuation of the Lift program in the next crop year?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Lift program, which was designed as a one-year program specifically to avoid the difficulties associated with such a program extending for a number of years, succeeded fairly well in attacking part of the inventory problem in regard to wheat. There is no intention to continue it.

Mr. Moore: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I see that a number of hon. members apparently wish to seek the floor to ask supplementary questions on this subject. May I caution hon. members that we ought to go to another subject soon. For the moment, however, the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Moore: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister what advice grain growers are to be given this year in regard to what they should or should not grow?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I should be glad to refer the hon. member to the statement I made in the House on October 28 or 29 and to indicate to him that I have nothing further to add at this stage, although we may have some elaboration before long.

GRASSLAND INCENTIVE PROGRAM—ON-FARM INSPECTION PRIOR TO PAYMENTS

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration who is in charge of the Wheat Board. In connection with the grassland incentive program announced by the minister today, will applications for payments be subject to on-the-farm inspections by PFAA?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the expected procedure is that half